

Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2022 1:29 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Isaiah 5

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20)

Isaiah 5 presents the third and final introductory oracle, as a preface to the book of Isaiah, that Isaiah, the prophet, received in a vision from the Lord God of hosts (Yahweh) concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Taken together, they summarize the major themes of the book of Isaiah, including the judgment that a sovereign and holy God is going to pour out on His chosen people, Israel, for their failure to "walk in His ways"--yet the great redemption and hope He will one day bring to Israel and the world!

In last week's lesson, on Isaiah 3-4, we saw more of the great contrast between how God intended His people to live and how they were actually living at the time of Isaiah, and how God was going to take away from them all the things they trusted in, because of their failure to trust in the Lord God of hosts! But, true to form, Isaiah's prophecy looks beyond that day to the day when, in accordance with God's covenants with Abraham and David, the "Branch of the Lord"--a "shoot springing from the stem of David (Jesus Christ) --would be sent from God to "purge the bloodshed of Jerusalem," set up His glorious kingdom, and reign over Mount Zion and all the nations of the world!

In chapter 5, Isaiah catches the attention of the people (including us) by singing a song of "his well-beloved concerning His vineyard"! (The first of several songs he will sing in the book of Isaiah!) It starts off as a "love story" but, as MacArthur notes, turns quickly into a tragic story about an investment that was made in a vineyard that was expected to produce good grapes but ended up producing only worthless ones! Anyone in Israel could understand the tragedy of this story because they could understand the immense investment of labor and money that was required to produce such a vineyard on the hillsides of Israel that were often steep and full of rocks! And they were familiar with the beautiful vineyards which had produced luscious grapes in the past there, and how much love and care had gone into making it happen! And so, the owner of the vineyard did everything he could to produce the finest grapes--planting the choicest vines, building a tower in the middle of the vineyard to watch and protect it, walling it in, hewing out a "wine vat," and expecting the finest grapes! But then the great disappointment in learning that what was ultimately produced was inedible, and that it was all a great loss!

"What more could I have done for my vineyard," the owner asked? "I will remove the hedge and break down the wall... and it will become trampled ground...and lay waste; and not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up...and I will charge the clouds to rain no rain on it!"

And only then does Isaiah reveal (as should be obvious to them by this point) that "the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel"! Wow! I think the people got the point!

(Can't help but relate this to the story Nathan, the prophet, used to expose the wickedness of the sin of David with Bathsheba, in II Samuel 12:1-7! Nathan's story about the rich man who, when looking for a lamb to use in preparing a meal for a traveler, took the "little ewe lamb" of a poor

man's, instead of taking one of the many he had from his own flocks! The poor man's lamb was the only lamb he had, and one that grew up and played with his children! Remember how upset David was! So much so that after hearing the story he said the rich man deserved to die! It was only then that Nathan pointed his finger at David and said: "Thou art the man!")

Interesting too that Jesus would later draw from Isaiah's story in telling His parable of the landowner (in Matthew 21:33-42)! You know the story! How the landowner (representing God) planted a vineyard, put a wall around it, dug a wine press, built a tower, etc., then rented it out to vine-growers (speaking of Jewish leaders) and went on a journey. Then, as harvest time approached, sent his servants, on two occasions, to receive the produce, only to learn that the vine-growers would beat them and kill them. And so sent his son, believing they would respect him, only to find out that they would kill him as well, to seize the inheritance! (Jesus was clearing alluding to Isaiah's parable, which would have been familiar to the Jewish leaders! And hence convicting to them, you'd think!)

Well, back to Isaiah 5 and the "six woes for the wicked," which form a summary of the "wild grapes" (and sin) of Isaiah's song, and which would bring judgment to the people and the land!

The sins, and the accompanied "woes," listed highlight predominately the sins of the proud and arrogant: greed, covetousness, and extortion (verses 8-10); drunkenness, revelry, and fleshly self-indulgence (verses 11-17); carelessness, hardheartedness, and mockery (verses 18-19); deception and perversion (verse 20); pride and conceit (verse 21); and injustice and corruption (verses 22-25)! Whew!

- Motyer notes that "the progressive nature of sin leads to arrogance...and a skepticism that doubts that God is active in the world and a blindness that cannot see Him at work"!
- Oswalt writes that "when passion for pleasure becomes uppermost in a person's life, passion for God and His truth and His ways is squeezed out"!
- McGee sees it all as "picture of a nation giving itself in abandon to sin without shame or conscience, and an attempt to destroy God's standards of right and wrong by substituting man's values which contradict His standards"!

Does all of this ring a bell in your mind, and sound so much like what we see going on in our culture, and even in some of our churches, in this very day?

Well, how will God respond?

Isaiah uses three metaphors (in verse 24) to describe it! "Therefore, as the tongue of fire consumes stubble and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away with the dust!" Why? "Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel!"

Motyer concludes that "the external foe of fire (God's wrath) and the internal foe of rotteness will leave no remainder!"

Isaiah's parable and song (still singing?) is summed up in verses 26-30 where Isaiah prophesies that God will summon a "distant nation" to come "as a roaring lion" and what Constable

interprets as "the pounding of waves on a shore" to destroy the land and leave it with only "darkness and distress"!

What an ending to Isaiah 5! So unlike our previous lessons, where there's always been a glimmer of hope!

Motyer notes that "though the first two oracles end with the message that human sin cannot frustrate God's purposes and that, in God, mercy triumphs over wrath, this third section ends differently--with the question of whether, when God has done all, the darkness of divine wrath closes in and the light flickers and fades"?

(Interesting that Jesus would later condemn the scribes and Pharisees with "seven woes" (in Matthew 23), then conclude His remarks with a stunning, compassionate lament over Jerusalem! "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling! Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!')

Well, I prefer to end this lesson, like we started it! With a song! A kind of "love song" (one which we sometimes sing in Sunday worship, written, I believe, by the Gettys)! Claiming the mercy of God! Sing it!

"What love could remember no wrongs we have done,  
Omniscient, all knowing, He counts not their sum  
Thrown into the sea without bottom or shore,  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more!"

What patience would wait as we constantly roam,  
What Father, so tender, is calling us home  
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor,  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more!

What riches of kindness He lavished on us,  
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost  
We stood 'neath a debt we could never repay,  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more!

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more  
Stronger than darkness, new every morn  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more!  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more!"

On to Isaiah 6!

Go with God and be a blessing!

Lowell